



October 21, 2016

Secretary Matthew Rodriquez
California Environmental Protection Agency
1001 I Street
P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, CA 95812

Re: CalEnviroScreen 2016 Update

Dear Secretary Rodriquez,

United in solidarity since early 2016, our community coalition has worked to ensure the inclusion of environmental justice communities in San Francisco, particularly in Bayview-Hunters Point, and the Bay Area. Now, our coalition of nine organizations (“the Coalition”) is comprised of community-based organizations that serve and represent disadvantaged communities and employers who understand the need to support these communities through direct employment in green jobs. For decades, our organizations have worked on environmental justice issues through community organizing and direct services, including environmental remediation, education services, renewable energy and energy efficiency installation, and workforce development in multiple industry sectors.

- I. CalEnviroScreen 3.0 (CES 3.0) appropriately includes Bayview-Hunters Point as a disadvantaged community.

First of all, the Coalition applauds the most recent inclusion of Bayview-Hunters Point by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment’s (OEHHA) CES 3.0. In a July 1, 2016 letter to the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), we noted that the Bayview-Hunters Point (“BVHP”) neighborhood has historically had high rates of poverty, environmental contamination, and health issues. In recognition of these longstanding environmental justice issues, forty organizations and over ninety individuals came together for a September 2016 Sustainability Summit to discuss the need for state and local investment in Bayview-Hunters Point.¹

¹ Brightline’s Sustainability Summit included a diverse set of stakeholders, including community leaders, service providers, policy advocates, clean energy companies, and government agencies such as the California Energy Commission and California Public Utilities Commission.

From this summit, BVHP's environmental burdens were openly discussed and verified. For instance, generations of BVHP residents continue to suffer from the effects of two decommissioned fossil fuel power plants.² BVHP's wastewater treatment plant also treats eighty percent of the County's sewage and subsequently emits extraordinary amounts of greenhouse gas emissions as well.³ Designated as a Superfund site by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, BVHP's former naval shipyard contains radioactive waste and toxic chemicals that continue to inflict long-term environmental damage, threaten the community's health, and undergo a delayed remediation process.⁴

In addition to these environmental burdens, many BVHP residents continue to face high unemployment and unique socioeconomic burdens. About 23.5% of BVHP community members live in poverty and the neighborhood faces a staggering 14.5% unemployment rate.⁵ These numbers do not reflect the Bay Area's high cost of living so the true extent of poverty in the neighborhood is likely greater. Other Bay Area communities, including West Oakland and Richmond, face similar issues. Thus, we submit the additional recommendations below to similarly include other marginalized communities in the Bay Area.

II. CES 3.0 should go further than the current rent-adjusted income indicator.

CES 3.0 now includes a rent-adjusted income indicator in addition to the poverty indicator. The Coalition welcomes the addition of an indicator that analyzes the impact rent burden has on low-income households. However, the CES 3.0 formula subtracts median gross rent from median household income and utilizes older data. This formula does not include the recent dramatic rent increases in the Bay Area over the last two years and other regional thresholds, such as the Supplemental Poverty Measure. The unprecedented housing shortage continues to affect the region, drive rent prices up, and escalate the overall cost of living. Estimates based on this data do not capture the burden recent rent increases place on residents, particularly on low-income families. Therefore, any indicator reflecting cost of living needs to be based on more recent data and additional cost-of-living expenses.

² An outdated power plant contaminated the community's air for decades, until community members and organizations successfully advocated for the plant's closure in 2006. Prior to its closure, the plant polluted the air so much that children suffered from chronic nosebleeds, as well as respiratory illnesses. Leslie Fulbright, *Big victory for Hunters Point activists / As PG&E closes its old, smoky power plant, the neighborhood breathes a sigh of relief*, May 15, 2006, available at: <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Big-victory-for-Hunters-Point-activists-As-PG-E-2534998.php>.

Though the community celebrated this plant's closure, a second heavily polluting plant remained open in an adjacent neighborhood for an additional four years, contributing to poor air quality in BVHP. Robert Selna, *S.F. makes deal to close dirty power plant*, August 14, 2009, available at: <http://www.sfgate.com/green/article/S-F-makes-deal-to-close-dirty-power-plant-3221750.php>.

³ Mitchell H. Katz, Health Programs in Bayview Hunter's Point & Recommendations for Improving the Health of Bayview Hunter's Point Residents, San Francisco Department of Public Health, September 19, 2006, at 8, available at: <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/files/reports/StudiesData/BayviewHlthRpt09192006.pdf>.

⁴ Id. at 6. San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee and District 10 Supervisor Malia Cohen recently sent the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency a letter that affirms these toxic conditions. Mayor Edwin M. Lee and Supervisor Malia Cohen, letter to U.S. EPA, September 19, 2016, available at: <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3113554-9-19-16-Mayor-Lee-amp-Sup-Cohen-Hunters-Point.html>.

⁵ American Community Survey, 2014 5-year estimates.

III. The number of census tracts has significantly decreased in the Bay Area.

The Coalition is also concerned about the overall decrease of identified disadvantaged communities throughout the Bay Area. Under CES 2.0, the Bay Area only had 4.2% of the disadvantaged communities (85 census tracts). Under CES 3.0, the Bay Area has even less: only 2.8% of the disadvantaged communities (56 census tracts).

This decline of census tracts does not make sense as Bay Area sources accounted for 22 – 24% of California Cap-and-Trade GHG emissions according to ARB’s most recently available data.⁶ Moreover, the Bay Area has 19% of the State’s population.⁷ These factors indicate that the tool does not fully capture the Bay Area’s disadvantaged communities, including parts of West Oakland near the Port of Oakland as well as East Oakland territory near the I-880 freeway. Moreover, we remain concerned about the exclusion of disadvantaged communities in other cities such as Richmond and San Jose.

One suggestion is to weigh all factors equally instead of only giving half weight to the environmental effects indicators. According to the draft report, these factors received half weight “because the contribution to possible pollutant burden from the Environmental Effects indicators was considered to be less than those from sources in the Exposures indicators.”⁸ However, environmental effects indicators such as hazardous waste facilities represent a significant possible pollutant burden. Hazardous waste not only threatens the physical environment surrounding it, but also the health of those living near the waste. The same holds true for other environmental effects indicators such as groundwater threats, clean-up sites, and impaired water bodies. The Coalition thus suggests that all factors receive equal weight.

Additionally, the pesticide indicator should factor in urban pesticide use. The pesticide use indicator only factors in agricultural pesticide use, so urban areas currently get a score of zero for this indicator. However, high levels of urban pesticide use pose a threat to the environment of urban communities including being a threat to water sources. CES 3.0 should also factor urban pesticide use into the pesticide use indicator.

Finally, OEHHA should update CES on a periodic basis. This will provide an opportunity to utilize the most recent data to ensure that changing environmental and socioeconomic conditions are encapsulated. In addition, stakeholders can better prepare for and engage in the public comment period.

IV. Conclusion.

The Coalition welcomes CES 3.0’s inclusion of BVHP and thanks the California Environmental Protection Agency for the opportunity to comment on the need for greater

⁶ Data used in this analysis were reported to ARB as part of Mandatory GHG Reporting for years 2013 and 2014. Available at: <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/reporting/ghg-rep/reported-data/ghg-reports.htm>.

⁷ <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/bayarea.htm>.

⁸ OEHHA & CalEPA, *Update to the California Communities Environmental Health Screening Tool*, September 6, 2016 Draft, at 12-13.

inclusion of disadvantaged communities throughout the Bay Area. We look forward to future opportunities to engage in this ongoing process to improve CalEnviroScreen.

Sincerely,

James Richards, President,
Aboriginal Blackman United

Sarah Wan, Executive Director, Community
Youth Center, SF Environment Commissioner⁹

Jacqueline Flin, Executive Director,
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Shamann Walton, Executive Director,
Young Community Developers

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⁹ For identification purposes only.